

Monday, October 17, 2016

Keep Me Current

Scarborough teen ambassador at Arctic Council

By Kate Irish Collins, kcollins@keepmecurrent.com -

October 6, 2016

As part of its mission, the Arctic Council supports a variety of observation posts, like this one, in the region of the Arctic Circle and the Arctic Ocean.

At its meeting in Portland this week the Arctic Council, made up of eight nations including the U.S. and Canada, will discuss the ongoing work on climate change and resilience, oil pollution prevention and response, scientific cooperation and other issues of concern for the world's northernmost region.

And among the youth ambassadors taking part in the council meeting will be 15-year-old Brayden Knezevich of Scarborough, a sophomore at the Baxter Academy for Technology and Science, a charter school based in Portland. He is one of 14 students from the academy who signed on to act as youth ambassadors for the council meeting, Oct. 5 and 6.

"I definitely have an interest in seafaring and science (and) learning about the Arctic is just an added bonus," Knezevich said in explaining why he wanted to take part in the Arctic Council event.

The youth ambassadors sailed into Portland Harbor aboard the Harvey Gamage, a schooner out of Castine, on Tuesday. From there, they made their way to the meeting, where they will learn firsthand about the environmental science, engineering and economic factors that connect Maine to this global effort, according to Kelli Pryor, executive director at Baxter Academy.

"We believe Baxter's young scientists will have a significant role to play in Maine's environmental and economic future and we are thrilled that they have this opportunity to learn about the work and the policies shaping that future," Pryor said in a press release.

Knezevich said he wanted to attend Baxter Academy "because I felt the public school system wasn't challenging me enough," and because of the wide variety of opportunities provided by the school, such as the chance to take part in the Arctic Council event.

"I wanted to be a part of (this) because it sounded like an amazing opportunity to meet new people and learn more about sailing, as it is a favorite pastime of mine," he said this week. "I think the most interesting part is being able to meet people from out of state," including two youth ambassadors from Alaska.

Pryor said when students from Baxter Academy were invited to serve as youth ambassadors for the Arctic summit, "we were excited to have them participate because part of our mission is to put students to work in the real world solving real problems."

"During the summit our students will have the invaluable opportunity to learn about the pressures facing the Arctic Circle nations, and they will learn them not only from policymakers and scientists, but also from people living and working in the region," she said.

The Arctic Council was first created in 1996, according to the organization's website. Its members include government representatives from Canada,

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. In addition, the council also includes indigenous peoples from around the Arctic.

The Arctic Council's senior officials meet twice a year to receive progress reports and plan the near- and long-term direction of the council, according to the organization's web page. The United States currently holds the rotating chairmanship of the council and its goals include climate change, economic and living conditions and Arctic Ocean safety, security and stewardship, the website said.

"The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues," the organization said on its website.

In particular the council focuses on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection.



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Brayden Knezevich, 15, of Scarborough, is serving as a youth ambassador to this week's Arctic Council meeting in Portland.